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I am writing in response to the Department of the Army's request for comment on the Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Assessment for Army 2020 Force Structure Realignment and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact. As the Army considers this restructure, it must do so prudently and weigh the consequences judiciously. I am pleased that the Army is considering the socio-economic impacts that this drawdown will have on the communities that support Army installations and I call the Army's attention to the critical relationship between Fort Huachuca, the city of Sierra Vista and Cochise County and the impact that the proposed force structure realignment could have on Southern Arizona, our state and our national security.

Fort Huachuca, the city of Sierra Vista and Cochise County have been united by more than geography for over 100 years. Fort Huachuca is the economic engine for Sierra Vista, Cochise County and Southern Arizona. As of September 2013, the post employed a civilian workforce of more than 7,000 people and nearly 5,000 active duty soldiers. Not only is the post the single largest employer in Cochise County, but it is also the largest military economic generator for the state of Arizona. Southern Arizona is home to a burgeoning defense industry and one of the nation's largest military and veteran communities including Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Yuma Proving Ground, the Barry M. Goldwater Range and the 162nd Wing of the Air National Guard. No state is as fiercely supportive of the military as Arizona.

One of the slogans for Fort Huachuca is "Home of the Future of Modern Warfare" and this is absolutely accurate. In March 2014, in testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Secretary of the Army John McHugh said "the capabilities at Huachuca offer advantages that are hard to replicate." In that same hearing, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond Odierno told our committee that the Army is increasing its investment and expanding its role in cybersecurity. Indeed, he said that the "capability in Fort Huachuca is one that is very important to [the Army]." I agree with the chief of staff that the capability found at Fort Huachuca is unsurpassed. Nowhere will you find more men and women who have the expertise and institutional knowledge in all aspects of cyber than in Southern Arizona.

Fort Huachuca is home to the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence offering human intelligence training through more than 50 courses. The importance of human intelligence training cannot be overstated. Human intelligence gathering is the backbone of our current and future military operations and is key to the success of our commanders on the battlefield.

Last year in a statement to the House Armed Service Committee, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey noted that the Army will continue to rely on proven systems such as Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) to "expand our ability to access and assess hard-to-reach targets." By Gen. Dempsey's own affirmation, the ISR expertise now present at Fort Huachuca and Sierra Vista will continue to play a critical role in the future security of the nation.

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I understand the budgetary pressures brought upon the Army by the Budget Control Act and sequestration. However, we must ensure that we continue to support the ability of the Army to protect our nation and execute future missions.

The threats that our soldiers face on the battlefield are changing. The enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan presented unique challenges for our armed forces. Fort Huachuca responded to those threats. The pristine electromagnetic spectrum around Fort Huachuca's Electronic Proving Grounds provided the necessary environment for the development of a myriad of IED-defeat technologies. Over the past decade of testing, Fort Huachuca and EPG have provided the Army indispensable expertise that resulted in technological advances that have saved the lives of countless American warfighters.

We have also witnessed a revolution in unmanned platforms. As such, Fort Huachuca and Sierra Vista share the Army's fifth-busiest airfield and the fort continues to provide the Army with quality UAV pilots. The Army's role in unmanned flight will not diminish. If anything, we will see an increased need for unmanned platform operators and Fort Huachuca is uniquely positioned to meet these needs for the Army.

Fort Huachuca is also an integral link in regional border security and drug interdiction efforts. The fort's director of emergency services assisted in establishing a regional "Fusion Cell" that flattens the intelligence-sharing network and drives efficiency among concerned law enforcement agencies. These efforts did not occur by chance. They have been the result of a concerned community dedicated to supporting the post, the Army and the national security assets they provide.

In April I visited with Fort Huachuca's leadership as well as members of the Fort Huachuca 50, a community group established to support and advocate on behalf of the fort, and learned of a new project that has been launched to attract additional tenants to the post. Thus far, they have been successful in forming two partnerships, one with the Border Patrol and the other with the Arizona Air National Guard. Both are building new facilities to meet their needs. These and future partnerships represent new revenue sources and are examples of how Fort Huachuca is maximizing its capabilities.

As the Army begins this comment period and holds listening sessions over the next year, I urge the Army to take into full consideration the views and recommendations of the people I represent who live and work in Cochise County and Southern Arizona. The Army must make prudent decisions that do not compromise our national security or undercut our military communities. Given all that Fort Huachuca has provided the Army over the past several decades and the uncertainties of future conflicts our nation's military faces, I believe the Army should continue to support the outstanding capabilities found at Fort Huachuca.

I remain committed to working with the Army to support its mission and our shared goal of a strong and ready national defense.

Sincerely,



Ron Barber
Member of Congress